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July 14, 2022

The Honorable Members of the City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90028

COUNCIL FILE 21-1471

In response to the City Council action on March 10, 2022, and the motion introduced by Councilmember Joe Buscaino and seconded by Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) appreciates the opportunity to submit the following report regarding the Department's recommendations to increasing recruitment and hiring of City residents and establishing incentive programs for current personnel who successfully recruit City residents to join the LAFD. This report is hereby transmitted to the City Council for consideration and approval.

Should you need additional information, please contact Deputy Chief Stephen Gutierrez, Training and Support Bureau, at (213) 978-3551.

Sincerely,


Deputy Chief Stephen Gutierrez
Training and Support Bureau

Attachments

FINDINGS

The Los Angeles Fire Department's Recruitment Plan is aimed at improving the overall ethnic and gender makeup of the LAFD to reflect the workforce diversity of the City it serves. The key to firefighter recruitment is conducting targeted outreach to attract non-traditional, diverse, and qualified applicants. The Firefighter Recruitment Section (FRS) manages the development of materials and programs conducting outreach to potential firefighter applicants. The mission of the FRS is to inform and educate potential firefighter applicants on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits necessary to become a firefighter for the City while ensuring the applicant pool reflects the communities we serve. The City of Los Angeles Personnel Department (Personnel Department) and the LAFD work together to review all the applicants applying to be firefighters. These applicants are screened through a seven-step process to ensure they are mentally and physically fit to be firefighters for the City of Los Angeles. Hiring responsibilities are shared between the two departments. The Personnel Department oversees paid marketing programs and oversees the testing via a private company, while the Department conducts field recruitment, supports candidates through the process, and makes the final decision on hiring firefighters.

The LAFD's Recruitment and Hiring Plan continues to evolve with the hiring needs of the Department. Our continued mission is to enhance efforts to recruit diverse candidates reflective of the communities we serve. This is done via outreach efforts to various community groups, faith-based organizations, sports, and athletic programs, schools/colleges, and military services to help identify qualified applicants. In addition, we have a strong ongoing social media campaign to engage the younger generation of potential firefighters. Finally, youth programs provide a progressive pathway to realizing a career with the LAFD is a possibility.

DISCUSSION

The LAFD and the Personnel Department are partnering agencies in the recruitment and hiring of firefighters. The Department's Firefighter Recruitment Section serves as support to the Personnel Department by providing personnel resources and expertise in the delivery of recruitment and hiring initiatives. The intent of these initiatives is to increase the number of women and minorities within the Department.

2018-2020**Strategic plan****Goal 4: Enhance LAFD sustainability and community resiliency****Strategy 2: Enhance efforts to recruit diverse candidates reflective of the communities we serve****Key Activity:**

1. Identify organizational recruitment needs to attract high-caliber candidates.
2. Engage with candidates already in the hiring process.
3. Expand hiring of female firefighters.
4. Expand hiring of African-American firefighters.
5. Expand hiring of Asian American Pacific Islander firefighters.

The motion initiated by the Los Angeles City Council is consistent with and may be included in the overall hiring plan. The focus on recruiting candidates in the City of Los Angeles has been a steadfast practice and emphasis on City residents may be beneficial to the hiring strategy.

The year-over-year trend of viable candidates appeared to be on a downward slope as a result of the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, recruitment budget reductions, vaccination mandate, the great resignation, and a nationwide shortage of firefighters. These factors played a significant role in impeding the recruitment and hiring of firefighters.

Fiscal Year 2021/2022 saw funding for marketing and advertising decline and there was still a lack of available in-person recruitment events, which resulted in virtual events only. While the 2020 hiring cycle had a large number of applicants, the current 2022 hiring cycle saw a significant decline in applicants. The following measures have been put in place to address the low number of applicants to the Department:

- Relaxed COVID-19 social distancing restrictions;
- Restoration of in-person recruitment events;
- Focused engagement and management of candidates in the hiring pipeline;
- Marketing and advertisement strategies directed at diversity outreach;
- Addressed impediments for candidates in the hiring process, including written tests, Field Investigations, and backgrounds leading to disqualification.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department understands and appreciates the importance of recruiting candidates who call Los Angeles home, as this may result in an increased number of firefighters who have a connection with the City and its residents. To maximize the Department's workforce potential, FRS uses the staff to reach out to local candidates who are residents. These activities include recruitment at colleges and universities, community and diversity-specific events, and partnerships with City entities. The following measures are in place or will be enhanced to ensure recruitment emphasis is placed on City residents:

1. Increase the recruitment and hiring of City of Los Angeles residents:

The Firefighter Recruitment Section will collaborate with the Personnel Department to evaluate current marketing initiatives and ensure strategies are in place to proactively recruit residents of the City of Los Angeles. Strategic planning, marketing, advertising, and outreach will be done through the following actions:

- Develop a media campaign targeting awareness for City residents of the benefits of joining the Los Angeles Fire Department.

- Direct marketing recruitment advertisements and short video clips in a public place within the City, as budgeting allows.
- Collaborate with Personnel Department and Economic Workforce Development Department to strategize on encompassing LA Local Hire programs as a path to becoming a firefighter.
- Collaborate with Personnel Department regarding incentive plans for City residents.
- Implement social media marketing including Facebook and Instagram ads, and Google ads. Sponsored web banners and graphics utilizing paid advertisement spaces that allow the Department to target City of Los Angeles residents. Increase brand awareness and direct prospects to the JoinLAFD webpage. These platforms enable the team to market hiring advertisements to City of Los Angeles residents and direct individuals to recruitment events, test locations, and hiring information.
- Join forces with City community-based organizations and faith-based institutions. Engage and build relationships with members of the Los Angeles community organizations to reach potential firefighter candidates. Build relationships with community leaders and stakeholders who can assist in recruitment within the City of Los Angeles.
- Collaborate with social media influencers with a diverse following to provide a look into the day in the life of a firefighter.
- Collaborate with the Los Angeles Community College District and Los Angeles-based universities. This outreach is developed through partnering with college athletics and fire science programs, instructors who are previous firefighters, and others who can help promote the JoinLAFD brand.
- Solidify pathways to becoming a firefighter:
 - **Girls Camp.** The LAFD Girls Camp is a 2-day introductory fire camp for high school ages girls 14-18. The goal of the camp is to instill confidence, leadership, and courage in young women while providing awareness of a potential career in the fire service.
 - **Youth F.I.R.E Program.** The Youth F.I.R.E. Program (YFP) provides high school youth ages 14-18 with basic technical competencies in the fire service while also developing their life skills.
 - **Firefighter/EMS Magnet.** The LAFD, in partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), provides high school students with a challenging learning environment that encourages high expectations for success. The firefighter/EMS High School

Magnet program gives students the opportunity for hands-on experiences to develop technical skills, knowledge, and abilities to prepare and understand what is required to become a Los Angeles firefighter.

- **Cadet Program.** This was designed for young men and women between 14-20 years old who have gained experience through our progressive pathway and are ready to commit to what it takes to become a firefighter.
- **Crew 3.** LAFD Crew 3 is a volunteer-type II hand crew managed by the LAFD. Crew 3 members receive wildland classes and hands-on training as well as career guidance to help with successful careers in the fire service.
- Focus on mentorship and retention of candidates. The mentorship and candidate retention initiatives have been focused on keeping candidates engaged and advancing them through the recruitment and hiring process.
- Partnerships with Department stakeholders and external organizations. This partnership includes engagement with both employee groups and private organizations. This allows the Department to leverage available resources and to communicate more effectively and efficiently with City of Los Angeles residents.

2. Incentive program for current personnel who successfully recruit City residents to join the LAFD:

The LAFD has never had an incentive program to recruit firefighters. This will be discussed with the Personnel Department to see if it could be instituted. If amenable, the LAFD would utilize a program similar to the LAPD police officer recruitment incentive plan. This plan would offer successful referrals from City employees be offered a total of **\$2000**.

- \$1,000 for each candidate that is appointed to the academy; and
- \$1,000 upon their graduation.

3. Report with recommendations to develop a point system to elevate City candidates in the hiring process.

The Personnel Department has been designated with the responsibility for researching recruitment methods, strategies, and incentives to determine the applicability of the Department's recruitment effort. In discussion with the City Personnel Department, to add

points to elevate City residents would require a City of Los Angeles Charter change/addition to Article X Civil Service, Sec. 1006 a-e. It would present challenges to the hiring process which is based on a merit system. There is no evidence of a nexus between residency and job performance that would warrant adding this provision.